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SUBJECT: ROUND ONE OF PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS: EGYPTIAN
MEDIA THEMES, NOVEMBER 7 TO 13

1. Summary: The Egyptian media gave extensive coverage to the first round of parliamentary elections on November 9, with Egyptian TV devoting live coverage throughout the day of voting. Pro-government media coverage emphasized what it termed the election's "transparency" and high voter turn-out and reported on the loss of seats by key opposition figures, such as Ayman Nour. Meanwhile, the independent and opposition media focused on allegations of vote buying and violence and reported on demonstrations critical of election results. A prominent pro-government commentator praised the first round as "great progress," but then stated that "the issue of bribes" was a problem. Most opposition and independent commentators focused on allegations of irregularities. "There will be no difference between the previous and the coming parliaments," wrote a commentator on November 11 in a leading independent daily. In addition to the elections, the Egyptian media covered the November 9 terrorist attacks in Jordan. Two large circulation pro-government dailies reported on November 12 that leading Islamic scholars in Egypt condemned the attacks as "illegitimate" and "anti-Islamic." End summary.

2. First round of parliamentary elections coverage, I: Egyptian TV (ETV) gave live, around-the-clock coverage to the first round of parliamentary elections on November 9. Throughout the day, TV reporters were stationed outside of polling places interviewing voters, many of whom spoke positively about their voting experience, while other voters complained of poor organization at some polling places. ETV also hosted throughout the day newspaper editors and political analysts to discuss the logistics of the elections and their meaning to future democratic reform. Leading pro-government daily Al-Ahram (circulation: 750,000) asserted on November 10 in its banner headline that the first round of elections were "the most honest in 50 years." Al-Ahram's front page reported that Ayman Nour, Head of Al-Ghad party and runner-up in this year's presidential election, lost his seat, as did the Deputy Head of Al-Wafd party; while leading ruling National Democratic Party (NDP) figures, such as Kamal Al-Shazly (still the longest serving parliamentarian in the world), retained their seats. Pro-government daily Al-Akhbar (circulation: 800,000) reported on its front page on November 10 that there was "unprecedented voter turn-out." The front page of leading opposition daily Al-Wafd (circulation: 75,000) alleged that there were "grave violations in the elections, using old voters lists and bribing voters with money and drugs." Independent daily Al-Masry Al-Youm (circulation: 25,000) reported on its November 10 front page that "the opposition reported NDP violations and fraud, including preventing voters from reaching stations and using nontransparent ballot boxes."

3. First round of parliamentary elections coverage, II: Ardently pro-government daily Al-Gomhouriya (circulation: 500,000) printed a banner headline that highlighted the "success of democracy" and the "opposition's defeat" on November 11. Al-Gomhouriya also reported that "in light of their poor performance in the first round of the elections, all [opposition] political parties are not expected to obtain the 5 percent (26 seats) needed to run in the 2011 presidential elections." Pan-Arab daily Al-Sharq Al-Awsat and Al-Wafd reported on November 12 that after Friday noon prayers the day before in a middle class neighborhood of Cairo, Muslim Brotherhood (MB) members "staged a large demonstration and shouted slogans in protest of government interference in the November 9 elections." The articles also reported that security forces arrested around 40 MB demonstrators. Al-Masry Al-Youm reported on November 11 that some of its reporters were assaulted by security forces on election day. Egyptian website bloggers were abuzz with news that an Al-Jazeera reporter was beaten by two unknown men on November 9. Independent daily Nahdet Masr (circulation: 25,000) reported on November 12 that the opposition movement Kifaya ("Enough") would organize demonstrations nationwide "to protest the NDP's rigging of the election." Deputy A/S Elizabeth Cheney was quoted on November 10 in Al-Ahram as saying that the elections were "an important step towards real democracy." DAS Cheney also appeared on ETV on November 12 to say that the international community would "work to ensure that Egypt is

taking further steps towards expanding the democratic process."

14. First round of parliamentary elections - commentary: While all pro-government commentators praised the first round of elections, many agreed that there were problems. Former Editor-in-chief of Al-Ahram, Ibrahim Nafei wrote on November 11, "There was great progress in the elections. However, the issues of bribes and religious slogans still have to be dealt with." A columnist writing in Al-Ahram the following day praised the "democratic atmosphere in which the elections were conducted," but then pointed out that "bullying and bribery" had tarnished the elections. Another columnist in Al-Ahram wrote pessimistically on November 11 that the first round of elections showed that "old regimes cannot cope with new systems and they only seek to remain in power without really believing in reform." The Editor-in-chief of Al-Wafd opined on November 11 that "the elections showed that the government and the NDP do not believe in a pluralistic system and will not give up its majority in the parliament by any means." "There will be no difference between the previous and the coming parliaments," wrote Al-Masry Al-Youm's leading columnist on November 11. "The NDP will not move toward reform by itself and needs to be pressed." The next day, the same columnist criticized the "lack of transparency. Bribery and bullying ruled supreme."

15. Jordan terrorist attacks: All major newspapers and ETV reported on November 11 that President Mubarak had pledged Egyptian support to Jordan in the aftermath of the November 9 terrorist attacks in Amman, along with details of the attacks. The same day, the unsigned editorial in Al-Gomhouriya blamed "the situation in Iraq" for the Amman terrorist attacks, stating that "justice is the first step to defeating international terrorism." On November 12, Al-Akhbar and Al-Gomhouriya reported that leading Islamic scholars and mosques in Egypt condemned the terrorist attacks as "illegitimate" and "anti-Islamic."

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